

Council 4 AFSCME Testimony – Appropriations Committee – 2/18/09

My name is Brian Anderson. I am a lobbyist for Council 4 AFSCME, a union of 35,000 public and nonprofit employees, including many of the state workers at the Department of Social Services, Department of Children and Families and in nonprofit human services agencies

Please restore funding for services and staff at the Department of Social Services. This staff serves as the bridge between poor families and the services they need. Governor Rowland slashed these positions to the bone during the 2003 layoff crisis. They have not been restored. Now eligibility worker caseloads for services such as Foodstamps and Medicaid are as high as 1,121 cases per according to DSS data, when they should be significantly lower (no more than 400). Many of the families receiving DSS aid are working families that are employed at full time hours. We also urge you to reject plans to privatize out more DSS worker jobs. Accountability, transparency and quality are lost with privatization. Savings are not achieved as we saw with the Maximus day care payment contract that doubled in cost in one year and completely botched the payments.

Also, please provide a sufficient wage and benefit increase for nonprofit workers in DSS, DCF and other state contracting human services nonprofits. Governor Rell has offered a 0% COLA increase for nonprofit workers. We join the CT Association of Nonprofits, CCPA and other human services providers in asking for a 5.5% COLA, and we ask that this COLA be largely earmarked for workers' wages and benefits.

Please provide for a state run DCF girls' secure facility. Girls' whose only crimes are to be runaways have wound up in York Correction facility for adult offenders. A twenty bed facility, which could be built as three or four different cottages, would come much closer to meeting the minimum need.

Council 4 understands the difficult position that the state finds itself in because of the economic crisis. But, we also understand that our wealthiest citizens and successful corporations have received immense tax cuts from the federal and state government in the past few years and could stand to contribute a portion of that in taxes for the common good. Economists and other experts all agree that in a time of recession and economic crisis, we need to strengthen public services and expand the middle class by investing in programs and people. We cannot cut our way out of this crisis. We have to invest in services and we have to invest in the middle class, so people feel good again about spending money in their communities.

